



## Tips to Improve Your Mental Health—Every Day!

Try the following tips to help plan a week that will leave you feeling good, inside and out. If you are receiving treatment for a mental health problem, these tips can help you manage your illness and support your treatment and recovery.

### sunday

**Relax.** Try meditating, taking a walk in a natural setting, or reaching out spiritually or through prayer.



Quiet reflection, alone or in the company of others, can improve your state of mind, strengthen your sense of self and community, and give you time away from a hectic schedule to collect your thoughts and re-energize for the week ahead.

### monday

**Make a plan.** Decide what tasks you need to complete for the week and make a plan for when and how to do them. If you are overscheduled, decide what can wait a week or two. If you don't have much on your schedule, plan some activities you'll look forward to.

### tuesday

**Surround yourself with supportive people.** Make plans with family members and friends, or seek out activities at which you can meet new people, such as a club, class or support group. Reconnect with someone you have lost touch with and create new memories.

### wednesday

**Take care of your body.** Taking care of yourself physically can improve your mental health. Be sure to eat nutritious meals, avoid cigarettes, drink alcohol only in moderation, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep and exercise regularly.



### thursday

**Give of yourself.**

Volunteer your time and energy to help someone else. You'll feel good about doing something tangible to help someone in need — and it's a great way to meet new people who share your interests and compassion.

### friday

**Broaden your horizons.**

Create a change of pace or expand your interests. Explore a new hobby, plant a garden, plan a road-trip, try a new restaurant, take dance lessons, or learn to play an instrument or speak another language.

### saturday

**Value**

**yourself.** Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism. Take stock of the qualities you like about yourself, your accomplishments and abilities. Take some time every day to relax, reflect and rejuvenate.



**To learn more, contact your local Mental Health Association, or call the National Mental Health Association at 800-969-NMHA (6642) or visit [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).**

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## Coping With Stress Checklist

**S**tress is a natural part of life. You can feel physical stress when you have too much to do, or when you've had too little sleep, aren't eating properly or have been ill. Stress can also be emotional: you can feel it when you worry about money, your job or a loved one's illness, or when you experience a devastating life event, such as the death of a spouse or the loss of a job. When stress is not addressed, it can affect many parts of your life, including your productivity and performance on the job. In fact, workplace stress causes about 1 million U.S. employees to miss work each day.

The key to coping with stress is to determine your personal tolerance levels for stressful situations. You must learn to accept or change stressful or tense situations whenever possible. Some of the following suggestions may help immediately, but if your stress is constant, it may require more attention or even lifestyle changes.

- **Take one thing at a time.** Pick one urgent task and work on it. When that's done, move on to the next.
- **Be realistic.** If you're overwhelmed at home or at work, learn to say, "No!"
- **Don't try to be superman/superwoman.** No one is perfect, so don't expect perfection from yourself.
- **Visualize.** Use your imagination to see how you can manage a stressful situation at work or home more effectively.
- **Meditate.** Five to 10 minutes of quiet reflection can bring some relief. If you're having a stressful day at work, close your door and meditate or go for a quick walk to clear your mind.
- **Exercise.** Thirty minutes of physical activity per day helps both body and mind. If you have an hour lunch break at the office, use half of it for a walk or a jog. Make plans with a coworker to do this a few times a week.

- **Hobbies.** Take a break and do something you enjoy.
- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** Get adequate rest, eat right, exercise, limit your use of caffeine and alcohol, and balance work and play.
- **Share your feelings.** Don't try to cope alone. Let friends and family provide support and guidance.
- **Be flexible!** Whether you're at home or at work, arguing only increases stress. If you feel you're right, stand your ground, but do so calmly and rationally. Be prepared to make allowances for other people's opinions and to compromise.
- **Don't be overly critical.** Remember, everyone is unique and has his or her own virtues and shortcomings.

You can ease stress by talking with friends or family. But, if that isn't enough, talk with your doctor, spiritual advisor or employee assistance program (EAP). They may suggest that you see a mental health professional to help you manage your stress or suggest other resources. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness; it's a healthy thing to do.



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